



SIERRA CLUB
JOHN MUIR CHAPTER

NEWS RELEASE

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Community Members remind us the World Water Day Starts at Home *You don't have to go far to find people suffering from polluted water*

MADISON—Today, on World Water Day, community members gathered to showcase the issues we have right here in Dane County. Speakers, including Senator Mark Miller and pediatrician Ann Behrmann highlighted local water issues as well as solutions that ensure everyone has access to clean, safe drinking water. This event was one of four other events around the state in Bayfield, Milwaukee, Madison, and La Crosse.

The Sierra Club-John Muir Chapter released [Water Quality and Health Impacts in Wisconsin](#), a ‘blue’ paper on some of the drinking water issues we face in Wisconsin and policy recommendations to correct them, including the passage of the Water Sustainability Act, co-sponsored by Senator Mark Miller and Representative Cory Mason.

“The science exists for Wisconsin to manage our water resources so the reasonable use doctrine is fully realized; that every person has a right to use water but not to the point where it denies others,” said **Sen. Mark Miller**. “The Water Sustainability Act will make sustainable water use a reality in Wisconsin.”

The [United Nations \(UN\) established World Water Day in 1992](#) in order to remind the world about the importance of protecting our freshwater resources. The day was tied to the UN’s goal of making sure everyone has access to safe water by 2030. In Wisconsin, there are real threats to ensuring everyone has access to safe drinking water, including lead pipes, nitrate pollution, bacteria, parasites like cryptosporidium, and pharmaceuticals.

“Last I checked, Wisconsin has not yet qualified as a ‘third world’ state. As a pediatrician, I think all children and their families deserve to be able to drink safe, clean tap water. We need legislators to support bills that support efforts to ensure safe tap water. Prevention also makes great economic sense--it's much cheaper in the long run than the costs of health and special educational supports needed to help a child poisoned by lead,” said **Ann Behrmann**.

There are several bills that have been introduced in the legislature that could impact drinking water. Some, like the “Water Sustainability Act” and the ‘Leading on Lead’ bill authored by Senator Robert Cowles and Representative Jeremy Thiesfeldt look to identify solutions to some of the concerns. Unfortunately, others like Senator Fitzgerald’s latest high-capacity well bill could perpetuate existing problems and cause future drinking water problems. More information about these and other bills are available in the blue paper.

“Here in Dane Co, the quality and quantity of our water resources are threatened. Phosphorus pollution causes algal blooms in our lakes; salt contamination has gotten into public drinking water and the water levels in Dane Co have dropped,” **said Liz Wessel**, leader of the Water Sentinels a joint project by the First Unitarian Society of Madison and the Sierra Club-Four Lakes Group. She continued, “We need to work together and create policies that will ensure we can drink local water as well as swim and fish in our lakes and streams.”

"As a lifelong Wisconsinite and Water Resource Management student, I'm deeply concerned for the future of our natural resources. Wisconsin should continue to develop water resource management with the health of citizens and the environment in mind," **said Marty Dillenburg**, 'blue paper' co-author. He continued, "I would like to show my kids the same places that connected me to the outdoors."

The Sierra Club-John Muir Chapter will release three additional blue papers in the next two months related to specific issues like lead pipes and water quantity issues in Wisconsin.

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Founded in 1892 by John Muir, the Sierra Club is America's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization. The Sierra Club's mission is to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth. The Sierra Club – John Muir Chapter is made up of 15,000 members and supporters working to promote clean energy and protect water resources in Wisconsin.